Report of the Planning Board of the Town of Arlington

1916

REPORT OF THE PLANNING BOARD.

Organization.

The Planning Board of 1916 is organized with Henry W. Hayes as Chairman and Jacob Bitzer as Secretary, the other members being Harry G. Porter, James P. Parmenter, Cyrus E. Dallin and Robert W. Pond.

The Board has held thirteen meetings during the year and considered the following subjects:

New street from Massachusetts Avenue to Mystic Street, west of Central Street; building lines on Massachusetts Avenue; plan of Interlaken development; preservation of the shores of Mystic Lake; Sucker Brook sewer; improvement of Sucker Brook, and the problem of school house locations.

New Street from Massachusetts Avenue to Mystic Street.

A proposed new street from Massachusetts Avenue to Mystic Street, west of Central Street, was the first matter to occupy the attention of the Board this year.

The Town Engineer was instructed to prepare a plan and estimate of the cost of building this street. This plan, as prepared by him, was considered by the Board and submitted to the Joint Board.

There has been a great demand for this cross connection for some years and this demand has increased rather than diminished. It is the opinion of the Board that the matter should be considered by the Town in the near future with a view to economy in construction, in the taking of land, to the elimination of grade crossings and to a possible solution of the street railway problem, as it would create a better and safer connection between the Bay State and Elevated Street Railways than any other suggested.

Building Lines on Massachusetts Avenue.

Last year the Board called the attention of the Joint Board to the necessity and the advantage of establishing building lines

on Massachusetts Avenue, from Academy Street to Lowell Street. The matter was presented to the Town by the Joint Board and the Town voted to refer the matter back to them, with instructions to report at a future meeting the estimated expense to the Town which would result from the establishment of these lines. The Planning Board is still of the opinion that it would be to the decided advantage of the Town and of the abutters to establish these lines and suggests to the citizens that they judge the matter fairly and also study the experience of other towns which have established these lines. The following statement, quoted from the report of the Winchester Planning Board dated December 31, 1915, will show what Winchester and other towns are doing in connection with building lines.

"We believe that this Act provides a means for making necessary widenings with the least expense to the Town and the least hardship to the owners of property. It will be observed that the imposing of a building line does not take away the right to use one's land except for building purposes. Lawns, shrubbery, walks and fences may be kept irrespective of the building line. It is hardly more than a notice to the owner that some time in the near or distant future a front strip of his land, varying from a few feet to forty feet (limited by the Act to twenty-five feet), depending upon the necessity, may be taken for highway purposes, and until that time the strip is to be kept clear of substantial structures which would be costly to remove. There is nothing new in the principle of the Act. A set-back restriction is very commonly found in residential property of good class. In many of the streets of Winchester there are such set-backs. The only difference is that, instead of being a private restriction and enforceable only by the owners of lots which are affected thereby, it becomes a public regulation enforceable by the Town. The Act has been adopted in the cities of Boston, Cambridge, Lynn, Medford, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Springfield, Woburn, and towns of Brookline, Dedham, Milton, Norwood, Watertown, Winchendon.

"It has been used in the metropolitan district by the town of Watertown, which during the last two years has placed a building line on several of its streets, and by the city of Quincy, which has established a fifteen-foot set-back for one thousand feet on School Street, one of the important thoroughfares of the town. In both

Watertown and Quincy no damages have been claimed by property owners, who are evidently content to wait until their land is actually taken for a physical widening of the street."

Plan of Interlaken Development.

During the summer there was referred for approval to this Board a plan of Interlaken, a new development located on the northerly side of Mystic Street and near the dam between the upper and lower lakes. The plan showed house lots with narrow frontage, streets with steep grades, and no provision for future development of the lake shore, therefore, the Planning Board did not approve this plan as it is injurious to the best interest of the Town to encourage development of this kind. The Board has recommended and endorsed a movement which will result in a resolve being presented to the next Legislature directing the Metropolitan Park Commission to investigate and report on the advisability of taking over the lower lake into the Park system and also on the necessity of restricting future building within a certain area of the shore, so that at some future time it may be possible to extend the boulevard along the Arlington side of the lake. This action will also prevent encroachment on the lake shore by land speculators with developments that will destroy its beauty.

Sucker Brook Sewer.

The Board desires to call the attention of the Town to the great necessity of proceeding at once to take steps to build the Sucker Brook sewer. Numerous complaints have reached Town officials in regard to existing conditions at Brattle and Grove Streets. The State Board of Health also has received complaints from physicians and citizens and our local Board of Health. The Board is of the opinion that it would be unwise to expend any of the Town's money on temporary construction to overcome this nuisance, therefore, the town officials have urged the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board to construct this sewer at once. A bill will be introduced into the Legislature authorizing the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board to make a study and plan of this sewer and report May 1, 1917. This will start the

preliminary work and will give the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board authority and an appropriation to proceed with the plans. The fact that the town of Lexington is rapidly connecting up with our present sewer may bring about a condition whereby our Massachusetts Avenue sewer will no longer be adequate to serve the district for which it was built. Under a former Act, the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board has authority, when this condition arrives, to proceed to build our Sucker Brook sewer. Under these conditions it seems that the Town may safely assume that work on the sewer will be started during the year 1917.

Improvement of Sucker Brook.

Sucker Brook from the Lexington line to the lower Mystic Lake should be improved. There are five basins or ponds which are no longer used for storing water for power purposes, and in these basins the water is allowed to flow over an extended area, thus forming unsightly pools which furnish breeding places for mosquitoes. The banks of the brook have been allowed to cave in, thus in some places not only obstructing the flow of the water but making new channels for the brook.

In view of the fact that the brook is mostly located in private land and is therefore generally under no public control, its regulation is a difficult matter and the only feasible method seems to be through a taking of the land necessary for its straightening and improvement. Such a taking might be made for sewer purposes, the land taken to be adjoining the taking which will probably be made for the new metropolitan sewer and the two takings could be used for a walk or drive.

This Board recommends that the Board of Public Works be authorized to make studies of the above project and to co-operate with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board.

School Problems.

The various school problems to which the Board alluded in its report of last year are now in the hands of Committees. Pending the report of those Committees the Board makes no further suggestions at this time.

The Board does not desire to make any extended recommenda-

tions in regard to future development. Taking into consideration the increased expenditures called for every year it is of the opinion that those improvements now under consideration and construction should be completed before embarking on any large new improvement.

HENRY W. HAYES,
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CYRUS E. DALLIN,
ROBERT W. POND,
JACOB BITZER, *Secretary.*